

# Rep. Lamar Smith (R)



## Elected 1986; 9th term

Smith's soft-spoken demeanor belies his reputation as one of the House's most ardent crusaders against illegal immigration and one of its most zealous defenders of law enforcement powers. In the 108th Congress, he sought to redirect his focus, looking to become a power broker on legislative issues affecting the high-technology sector.

His avenue for doing so is the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Courts, the Internet and Intellectual Property. The assignment is a fine forum from which he can address the priorities of his new constituency, which includes the booming tech corridor between San Antonio and Austin, home of Dell Computer Corp.

The new gavel he has chosen is a good example of how a lawmaker's focus can shift as a consequence of redistricting; when Smith first arrived in Congress in 1987, he represented an area of West Texas that was bigger than Ohio, in which thousands of his constituents were separated from the Rio Grande by little more than vast tracts of rangeland. Smith's early legislative concentration was a clear outgrowth of that geography: For six years, until GOP term limits forced him to switch, Smith chaired the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration

He took on the chairmanship of the Crime Subcommittee only for the 107th Congress, where he supported the Bush administration's quest to give law enforcement officers more power to pursue suspects. In the process, he became a prominent foe of civil libertarians and privacy advocates, who criticized Smith for being willing to give police and other government agents far too much authority. The criticism did not faze Smith, who has said the nation's desire to combat terrorism more forcefully after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks requires new ground rules to give law enforcement "all the necessary tools to confront the daunting tasks ahead."

Nine days after the attacks, Smith introduced legislation to broadly expand wiretapping authority by altering the federal eavesdropping law to apply to electronic communications, such as e-mail and instant messaging. The measure became part of the anti-terrorism law enacted later in 2001.

Smith later promoted legislation to stiffen penalties for hacking computer networks by, among other things, boosting the maximum penalty to life in prison for hackers who plot or cause death from an electronic attack. The measure, enacted in the 2002 law establishing the Homeland Security Department, also gave the government new powers to seek information — including financial transactions and the contents of e-mails — from Internet service providers that believe "in good faith" that someone poses a threat. Under Smith's measure, law enforcement officers may conduct emergency surveillance of computers without first obtaining court approval.

Still, Smith bristles at being given a "tough on crime" tag. "That's just too much of a stereotype," he says. "It's trying to provide deterrents so criminals do realize they're going to pay a price if they do commit crimes. . . . It's not always being harder on criminals, it's coming up with solutions that reduce crime."

His hard-line stances are not limited to criminal law; his passion for tighter immigration policies has not waned. Even as his tenure chairing the Immigration Subcommittee was coming to an end, he subpoenaed outgoing Attorney General Janet Reno late in 2000 for records about illegal immigration. In the 106th Congress, Smith coordinated the GOP leadership to block an attempt, promoted by President Clinton, to provide amnesty for

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**COMMITTEES**

Judiciary  
(Courts, the Internet & Intellectual Property - chairman)  
Science  
Select Homeland Security

**HOMETOWN**

San Antonio

**BORN**

Nov. 19, 1947, San Antonio, Texas

**RELIGION**

Christian Scientist

**FAMILY**

Wife, Elizabeth Smith; two children

**EDUCATION**

Yale U., B.A. 1969 (American studies); Southern Methodist U., J.D. 1975

**CAREER**

Lawyer; rancher; reporter

**POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Texas House, 1981-82; Bexar County Commissioners Court, 1983-85

**ELECTION RESULTS**

**2002 GENERAL**

Lamar Smith (R)	161,836	72.9%
John Courage (D)	56,206	25.3%
D G Roberts (LIBERT)	4,051	1.8%

**2002 PRIMARY**

Lamar Smith (R)	unopposed	
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**2000 GENERAL**

Lamar Smith (R)	251,049	75.9%
Jim Green (D)	73,326	22.2%
C. W. Steinbrecher (LIBERT)	6,503	2.0%

**PREVIOUS WINNING PERCENTAGES**

1998 (91%); 1996 (76%); 1994 (90%); 1992 (72%); 1990 (75%); 1988 (93%); 1986 (61%)

illegal immigrants in the United States since 1986. He used the records obtained from Reno to argue that illegal immigration had remained almost the same before and after a previous amnesty program in 1986.

Smith's signature legislative accomplishment is the 1996 law that cracked down on illegal immigration by increasing penalties for document fraud and the smuggling of aliens, and making it easier for illegal immigrants to be detained at the border or deported after arrival. He originally had introduced a much tougher measure that addressed legal as well as illegal immigration, but he narrowed it as specific provisions ran into opposition from Democrats, the Senate and pro-business Republicans.

In 2000, Smith butted heads with business leaders and top Republicans again when he fought a proposal to expand a visa program for highly skilled workers. He drafted several plans to boost the number of visas while requiring employers to demonstrate they had first tried to recruit workers in the United States. House Republican leaders ignored him and pushed into law an expansion of the program without Smith's restrictions.

On the Science Committee, Smith has worked to expand math and science education. An occasional stargazer, in 2002 he joined with a Democratic colleague from Texas, Nick Lampson, to press legislation to lay out clear goals for NASA's human space flight program after completion of the International Space Station. Among the goals is developing, by 2022, a reusable vehicle that could travel to Mars and back.

Smith's genial personality blunts the hard edge of his conservatism and he has enjoyed warm relations with many Democrats. He also occasionally works across party lines. For example, Smith collaborated with Democratic Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut on efforts to increase family-friendly television programming.

A fifth-generation Texan, Smith went to Yale for college and was a business reporter for the Christian Science Monitor in Boston. After earning a law degree in Dallas, he returned home to San Antonio and entered politics. After a year in the state House and two years as a Bexar County commissioner, he won his seat in Congress in 1986 when Republican Tom Loeffler left to run, unsuccessfully it turned out, for governor.

When George W. Bush — then a Midland oilman with one losing congressional race under his belt — did not seek the seat, Smith won a six-way contest for the GOP nod by defeating an even more conservative San Antonio official, Van Archer, in a runoff. With Karl Rove as a strategic consultant, Smith won that fall with 61 percent of the vote over former Democratic state Sen. Pete Snelson in what still stands as by far his closest congressional race.

**KEY VOTES**

**2002**

- No Overhaul campaign finance law; ban "soft money" and restrict advocacy advertising
- Yes Back Bush's defense budget increase
- Yes Extend 1996 welfare law
- Yes Adopt Bush's discretionary spending limit
- Yes Pass GOP Medicare prescription drug plan
- No Create independent Sept. 11 commission
- No Extend union protections to Homeland Security Department employees
- Yes Revive fast-track procedures for trade agreements
- Yes Authorize war against Iraq
- Yes Advance bankruptcy overhaul opposed by abortion opponents

**2001**

- Yes Nullify Clinton Labor Department ergonomics rule
- Yes Cut taxes by \$1.35 trillion through fiscal 2011
- No Maintain ban on oil drilling in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- Yes Approve Bush proposal to limit managed-care plan liability for coverage decisions
- No Divert money from crop subsidy payments to land conservation
- Yes Expand law enforcement power to investigate suspected terrorists

**CQ VOTE STUDIES**

	PARTY UNITY		PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
2002	97%	3%	89%	11%
2001	99%	1%	95%	5%
2000	99%	1%	25%	75%
1999	96%	4%	19%	81%
1998	95%	5%	23%	77%

**INTEREST GROUPS**

	AFL-CIO	ADA	CCUS	ACU
2002	13%	0%	100%	96%
2001	8%	0%	100%	96%
2000	0%	5%	85%	96%
1999	13%	0%	88%	84%
1998	0%	0%	100%	92%

**TEXAS 21**

**Central — parts of San Antonio, Austin and suburbs**

The 21st is a staunchly Republican, mostly suburban and rural district that connects the cities of San Antonio and Austin via Interstate 35, with the so-called Hill Country and some rural ranching communities in between and to the west.

About 30 percent of the 21st's population comes from San Antonio's Bexar County (pronounced BEAR), with the district taking in the mostly comfortable north and northeast parts of the city and its suburbs, and cupping the airport (located in the 20th). Another 25 percent of the population comes from Austin's Travis County, mostly in suburbs populated with workers in the high-tech industry. Comal County, the only other jurisdiction with at least 50,000 people, is located northeast of San Antonio and takes in almost all of New Braunfels, which was founded by German immigrants in the 1840s. Nearly one in five district residents claims some German ancestry, more than any other Texas district.

Though the 21st has no military bases of its own, nearby installations contribute to the economy. The city of Kerrville has an active veterans hospital. Hill Country is home to many retirees who once lived in Austin or San Antonio. Llano County, in the northern part of the district, has the highest percentage of elderly residents in the state (31 percent). Kerr and Gillespie counties, southwest of Llano, also have large over-65 populations.

The 21st produces a consistent GOP vote at all levels. In 2002, GOP Gov. Rick Perry won 73 percent of the district vote, his third-highest total among Texas' 32 districts.

**MAJOR INDUSTRY**  
Agriculture, technology, government

**CITIES**  
San Antonio (pt.), 162,956; Austin (pt.), 89,846; New Braunfels (pt.), 35,328; Kerrville, 20,425; Canyon Lake (unincorporated), 16,870

**NOTABLE**  
The Admiral Nimitz Museum and Historical Center in Fredericksburg has a major collection of Allied and Japanese aircraft, guns and other artifacts from World War II; Former President Lyndon B. Johnson was born in Blanco County.